

**ORDINANCE NO. 9-00**  
**CHAPTER 25**  
**ARTICLE 11**  
**TO ESTABLISH THE JAMES**  
**McMILLAN SCHOOL HISTORIC**  
**DISTRICT**

**AN ORDINANCE** to amend Chapter 25, Article 11, of the 1984 Detroit City Code by adding Section 25-2-131 to establish the James McMillan School Historic District, to establish conservation as the design treatment level for the district, and to define the elements of design for the district.

IT IS HEREBY ORDAINED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY OF DETROIT THAT:

**Section 1** Chapter 25, Article 11, of the 1984 Detroit City Code be amended by adding Section 25-2-131 to read as follows:

**Sec. 25-2-131. James McMillan School Historic District.**

- (a) A Historic District to be known as the James McMillan School Historic District is hereby established in accordance with the provisions of this article.
- (b) This Historic District designation is hereby certified as being consistent with the Detroit Master Plan.
- (c) The boundaries of the James McMillan School Historic District are as shown on the map on file in the office of the City Clerk, and shall be: on the north, a line fifty (50) feet south of and parallel to the north boundary of Lot 9 of the Subdivision of PC 718 for the heirs of Leonard Lenox (L68 P111 Deeds), said line being extended eastward and westward; on the east, the centerline of south Springwells Avenue; on the south, a line two hundred and forty (240) feet north of and parallel to the south boundary of Lot 9 of the Subdivision of PC 718 for the heirs of Leonard Lenox (L68 P111 Deeds), said line being extended eastward and westward; and on the west, the centerline of southwest End Avenue. The legal description is as follows: The south 722 feet of the north 772 feet of Lot 9 of the Subdivision of PC 718 for the heirs of Leonard Lenox, as found at Liber 68, Page 111, Deeds, Wayne County Records.
- (d) The design treatment level of the James McMillan School Historic District shall be conservation as provided for in Section 25-2-2 of this Code.
- (e) The defined elements of design, shall be as provided for in Section 25-2-2 of this Code, as follows:
  - (1) **Height.** The original James McMillan School Building is two (2) stories tall on a high basement. The annex is two (2) stories tall with a tall, single-story auditorium and gymnasium within. Connected to the southeast corner of the original school building is a one-story tall addition.
  - (2) **Proportion of buildings front facades.** The front facade of the original James McMillan School Building is significantly wider than tall to its eaves. The outer bays and central tower section project forward; therefore, the bays between are recessed. The annex is also significantly wider than tall along its west elevation.

**(3) Proportion of openings within the facade.** Openings amount to approximately twenty per cent (20%) of the facade of the original James McMillan School Building. Although most window arrangements are taller than wide, where grouped together in a single opening in the masonry they often result in a horizontal composition. The central bay contains a large round-arched opening leading to the entrance. At second story level, the central bay features a window arrangement composed of two (2) arched openings, above which is a blind round panel, with two (2) narrow horizontally rectangular openings positioned just beneath the eaves of the tower roof. Both stories of the bays flanking the central tower are penetrated by a set of three (3) openings containing single-hung sash, four-pane windows with transoms above. To the outside of these sections on both stories is a single narrow opening containing a pair of transoms atop two (2) narrow rectangular windows. Each story of the outer bays of the original school building contains a set of four (4) rectangular openings two (2) times taller than wide which contain four-over-four double hung pane windows. The basement window openings are slightly taller than wide and originally contained double-hung sash windows. The side elevations of the original school building have similarly proportioned arrangements of openings. A single square opening containing three (3) narrow rectangular four-over four double-hung sash windows exists over the large rectangular entrance opening of the north face of the annex. The west elevation of the annex along West End Avenue is composed of three (3) large rectangular, two-story tall openings subdivided into three (3) vertical and horizontal sections, with some parts now filled in with brick. Other openings along this elevation include a metal door near a grouping of three (3) six-over-six double-hung sash windows and a secondary entrance within a molded stone surround and a horizontal row of three (3) six-over-six double-hung sash windows sharing a stone sill above at second story level. Window openings that may have existed on the southern part of the west elevation of the annex have been filled with brick, except for a relatively small horizontal rectangle of glass block at second story level. A metal door exists at the rear of the gymnasium; rows of openings to the north of the gymnasium on the east elevation of the annex are in the form of nine-over-nine double-hung sash windows; below these at first floor level are altered horizontal openings containing modern arrangements of three (3) windows. The one-story addition in the rear has a large horizontal row of windows in a single opening.

**(4) Rhythm of solids to voids in front facades.** A symmetrical grid pattern is clearly discernable on the front facade and the relatively unaltered north elevation of the original James McMillan School Building. Fenestration within the five (5) main bays of the front facade is rhythmically arranged; there are rows of four (4) windows within the two (2) outer bays, rows of three (3) windows in the bays flanking the central bay, and a pair of windows in the central entrance bay.

**(5) Rhythm of spacing of buildings on streets.** The James McMillan School Historic District is composed of the original building, which is set back noticeably further on its lot than the annex, and its annex, which is situated south of the original building and nearer to the front lot line, creating a partial courtyard in front of the school.

**(6) Rhythm of entrance and/or porch projections.** Not applicable due to single building district.

**(7) Relationship of materials.** Brick is the dominant material of the original James McMillan School Building and annex. Standard building bricks are juxtaposed with raised brick, decorative brick and molded brick. Sills and stringcourses are stone, as are the pier capitals in the entrance and the porch steps. There is a stone panel with the carved legend "Jas. McMillan School" above the main entrance, and the words "Ad McMillan Annex 1924" in stone above the annex entrance. Wooden sash windows are recessed in wooden window frames. The present wooden-board cornice treatment is not original. The roof is covered in asphalt shingles.

(8) **Relationship of textures.** Several different textural effects are created by the type, the treatment, and the juxtaposition of materials. The major textural effect is that created by the brick laid in mortar contrasted with the smooth wooden sash and window frames and with carved and smooth stone. Raised brick belt courses, sills, water tables, decorative brickwork, carved stone and raised brick corner quoins contribute greatly to textural interest; the asphalt roof generally does not.

(9) **Relationship of colors.** The natural light orange brick color of the original school and the yellow brick of the annex are prominent. They are juxtaposed with beige stone elements, yellow-painted window frames, brown-painted window sashes and reddish-brown painted replacement cornices. The asphalt roof is a slate gray color.

(10) **Relationship of architectural details.** The architectural elements and details generally relate to the Romanesque revival style of the original school building and the Neo-Georgian style of the annex. The central bay extends upward, originally culminating in a tower rising above the roof line that has since been reduced in size and altered in appearance. Stone piers with medieval influenced stone capitals bearing flora and fauna flank each side of the broadly arched entrance. Foliated imposts, a diamond-patterned molded brick extrados, and brick spandrels with raised fifth courses ornament the face of the entrance. Incised in the nameplate above the arch, centered within a wide band of weave-patterned brick squares, is the name, "Jas. McMillan School ' ' " At second story level is a pair of arched windows featuring voussoirs composed of narrow bricks laid three (3) deep, a continuous stone band running horizontally at sill and impost levels, an arcaded extrados of molded brick, and impost blocks in the form of foliated balls. Centered above the windows is a rondel with the dates 1889 and 1895 inscribed. Molded, scroll-like keystones, brick voussoirs, continuous window sills and lintels are decorative features of the recessed section flanking the central section. The outer bays feature window sills supported on pairs of molded brick console brackets, stacked round edged bricks linked by flat bricks between each window opening, and, around these groupings of windows, a field of square bricks molded with a basket weave pattern edged with beaded and egg-and-dart patterned molded brick at the outer edges. Basement windows are framed as a group with diamond-patterned molded brick. The side elevations of the original school building had architectural detail of similar arrangement, although the south elevation has been altered to accommodate later additions. Raised brick quoins are located at the corners of the end sections of the front facade of the original school building and annex. The entrance of the annex is neo-Georgian in style; it is enframed in a masonry architrave and a segmentally arched pediment, with a stone panel above bearing the words, "Ad McMillan Annex 1924". Windows are banded with continuous sills. The rear elevations are more utilitarian in appearance than the other visible elevations.

(11) **Relationship of roof shapes.** The main roof of the original James McMillan School Buildings is a shallow hip; it is intersected by gable roofs over the projecting wall surfaces of the outer bays of the front facade and the center bays of the side elevations. The tower is crowned by a shallow hipped roof. Roofs over the annex and one-story addition are not visible from the street.

(12) **Walls of continuity** . Not applicable due to Single Building District.

(13) **Relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatments.** The original James McMillan School Building is set back substantially from the front property line, allowing space for a grass turf front lawn landscaped sparsely with flowers planted close to the building and a few trees close to the public sidewalk. The front yard is bisected by a straight walk leading from the public sidewalk; to the sides, two (2) additional diagonal walkways converge at the front entrance. A concrete walkway also extends from the public sidewalk along the southern end of the front yard to the annex entrance in the southeast corner of the front courtyard. A flag pole is situated on the north half of the lawn. The front yard is enclosed by a four (4) foot high chain

link fence; the fence rises in height along the front building line to the north and south of the original school building with its annex and around the perimeter of the school property. The fence contains a gate into the gravel parking lot and service area that exists behind the school. A partially paved and grass turf play area containing playground equipment exists to the north of the school. A row of oak trees is planted parallel with the fence line in the play field north of the original school building; public lighting in front of the school is mounted on plain wood poles.

(14) **Relationship of open space to structures.** Open space characterizes and defines the surrounding area. A partial courtyard is created by the siting of the annex south and forward of the original school building on the front building line; beyond the annex to its south is the entrance to a gravel parking lot extending to the rear of the school building. To the north of the original school building is a large, partially paved and grass turf playground containing play equipment and an open field. To the east of the district is a former railyard.

(15) **Scale of facades and facade elements.** The James McMillan School is large in scale, with some large elements, such as the central arched entrance tower, gables, and groupings of windows. But details within are generally small to moderate in scale, such as molded and patterned brick or running diamond patterns, that, where laid together, create large fields of pattern. Individual details, such as impost blocks and keystones, are small in scale.

(16) **Directional expression of front elevations.** In general, the directional expression of the James McMillan School is horizontal. Because the tower has been altered and truncated, the vertical thrust that originally existed in the center no longer exists to its former degree, and the addition of the annex extends the horizontal direction of the building.

(17) **Rhythm of building setbacks.** The original James McMillan School is set back significantly from the property line; the annex is positioned close to the front lot line.

(18) **Relationship of lot coverages.** Not applicable due to single building district.

(19) **Degree of complexity within the facades.** The facade of the original James McMillan School is straightforward in its arrangement of elements and details; overall, there is a low degree of complexity in its balanced arrangement but a complexity exists in the detail of the original school building.

(20) **Orientation, vistas, overviews.** The James McMillan School is the only building on its block oriented towards West End Avenue. The entrance to the annex is oriented toward the open space in front of the original school building. Behind the school complex to the east are the tracks of the Del Ray Rail yards.

(21) **Symmetric or asymmetric appearance.** The original McMillan School Building is symmetrical in appearance; the annex is not symmetrical.

(22) **General environmental character.** The James McMillan School is the largest building in a small scale late nineteenth to early twentieth century urban residential area of Southwest Detroit that is surrounded by heavy industrial uses and small scale commercial uses. Although disinvestment and abandonment have taken their toll, McMillan School contributes significantly to the architectural diversity, historical continuity and social fabric of the community.

**Section 2.** All ordinances or parts of ordinances, or resolutions, that are in conflict with this ordinance are repealed.

**Section 3.** This ordinance is declared necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health, safety and welfare of the People of the City of Detroit, and shall become effective in accordance with the applicable provisions of the 1997 Detroit City Charter.

(J.C.C. P. 327)	February 16, 2000
Passed:	May 17, 2000
Published:	June 2, 2000
Effective:	July 2, 2000

JACKIE L. CURRIE  
City Clerk